



23 OCT 96

ROBINSON
HARRIS
VON GRAWBADGER

STARMAN



SAND
AND
STARS

PART FOUR OF FOUR



WHEN IT HAPPENS,
IT HAPPENS QUICKLY.

AND SLOWER
THAN JACK
COULD POS-
SIBLY HAVE
IMAGINED.

WES?

sand and stars

PART
FOUR

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RELEASE
THE BOY!

CAGNEY'S STILL IN JACK'S
HEAD FROM EARLIER
THOUGHTS, AND THIS NOW
SEEMS LIKE THE END OF
ONE OF HIS OLD FILMS.

WHERE HE SINGLE-HANDEDLY
TOOK HIS OPPONENTS ON,
ARMED ONLY WITH BULLETS,
DEFIANCE, AND DESPERATION.

JACK CAN'T SEE
WESLEY'S FACE
BEHIND THE MASK,
BUT IMAGINES HIM
WILDLY LAUGHING
AT FATE...

...IN GRAINY
BLACK AND WHITE.



WHAT
IN THE
HELL?

YOU GOT
ME. DAMNEDEST
THING I'VE EVER
SEEN.

WESLEY EMERGES...
OLD AND FRAIL, BUT
IN NO WAY FALTERING
... GAS GUN OUT AND
READY.

THE ODDS ARE INSUR-
MOUNTABLE. JACK
THINKS OF THE MOVIE
THE ROARING TWENTIES,
WHERE CAGNEY FOUGHT
THE BAD GUYS ON NEW
YEAR'S EVE IN THE
SNOW.



OF COURSE, CAGNEY
DIED AT THE END
OF THAT MOVIE.

SHOULD
WE SHOOT
HIM?

CAGNEY DIED AT
THE END OF A
LOT OF THEM.

I
GUESS.



NOOOOOO!

JEEZ! GET
OFF ME!

AL! GET
HIM OFF
ME!



HOLD STILL!
I'LL SHOOT HIM
OFF YOU!

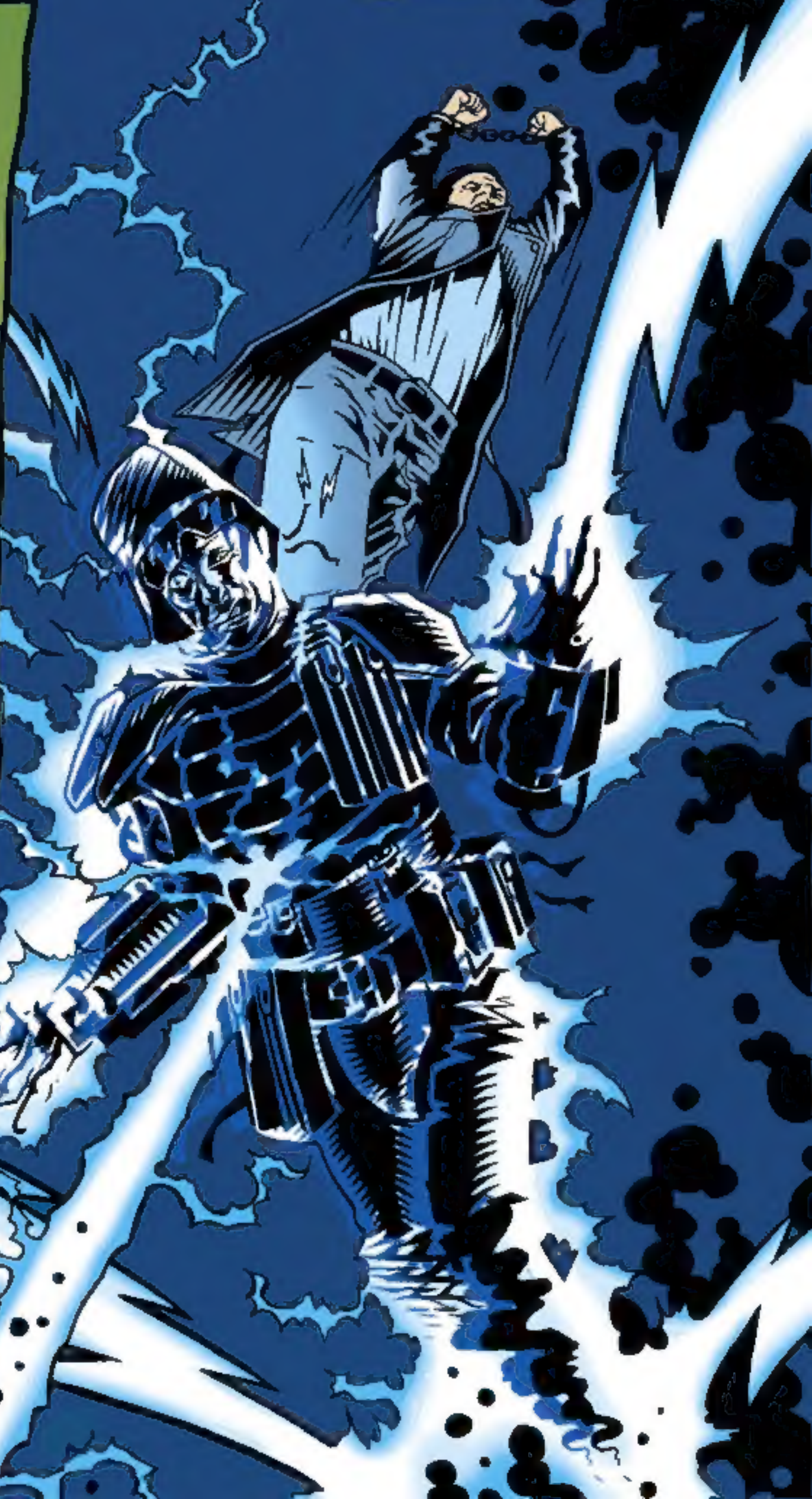


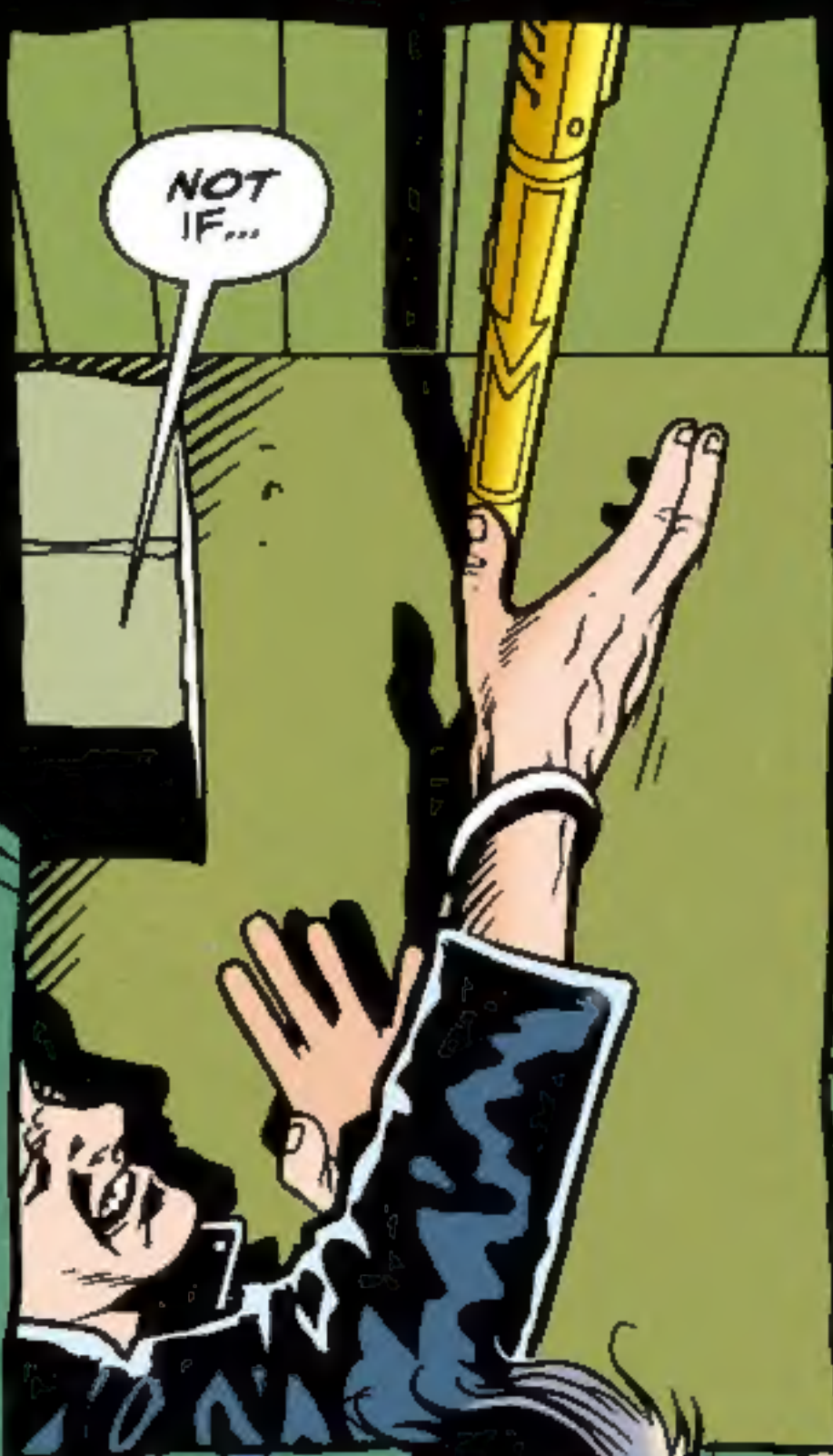
OH.



GOT TO--

NO!
DON'T FIRE,
I'M--!







I KNOW!



THERE,
WESLEY.

ALL CLEAR.
ALL DONE.



NO, JACK.
NOT DONE.
NOT EVEN
CLOSE!

THIS MAN'S
ARMOR
IS OVER-
HEATING.
CAN'T YOU
SEE?

IT'LL
EXPLODE!



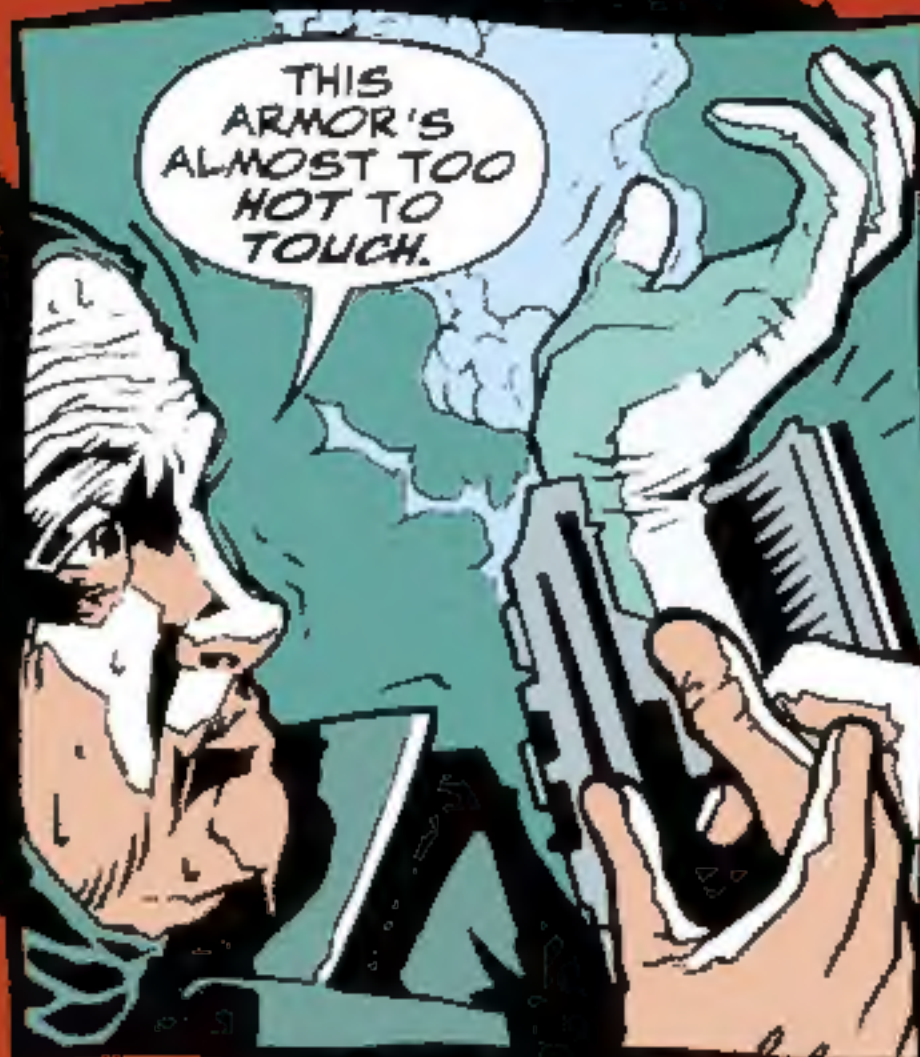
THESE GUARDS
MAY NOT HAVE
BEEN NICE,
BUT THEY WERE
ONLY DOING THEIR
JOB.

AS FAR AS
THEY'RE CON-
CERNED, YOU
AND I ARE
INTRUDERS.

YOU DON'T
WANT A MAN'S
DEATH ON YOUR
HANDS IF YOU
CAN HELP IT,
JACK.

NO,
WES...

...I SURE
DON'T.





THAT WAS CLOSE.

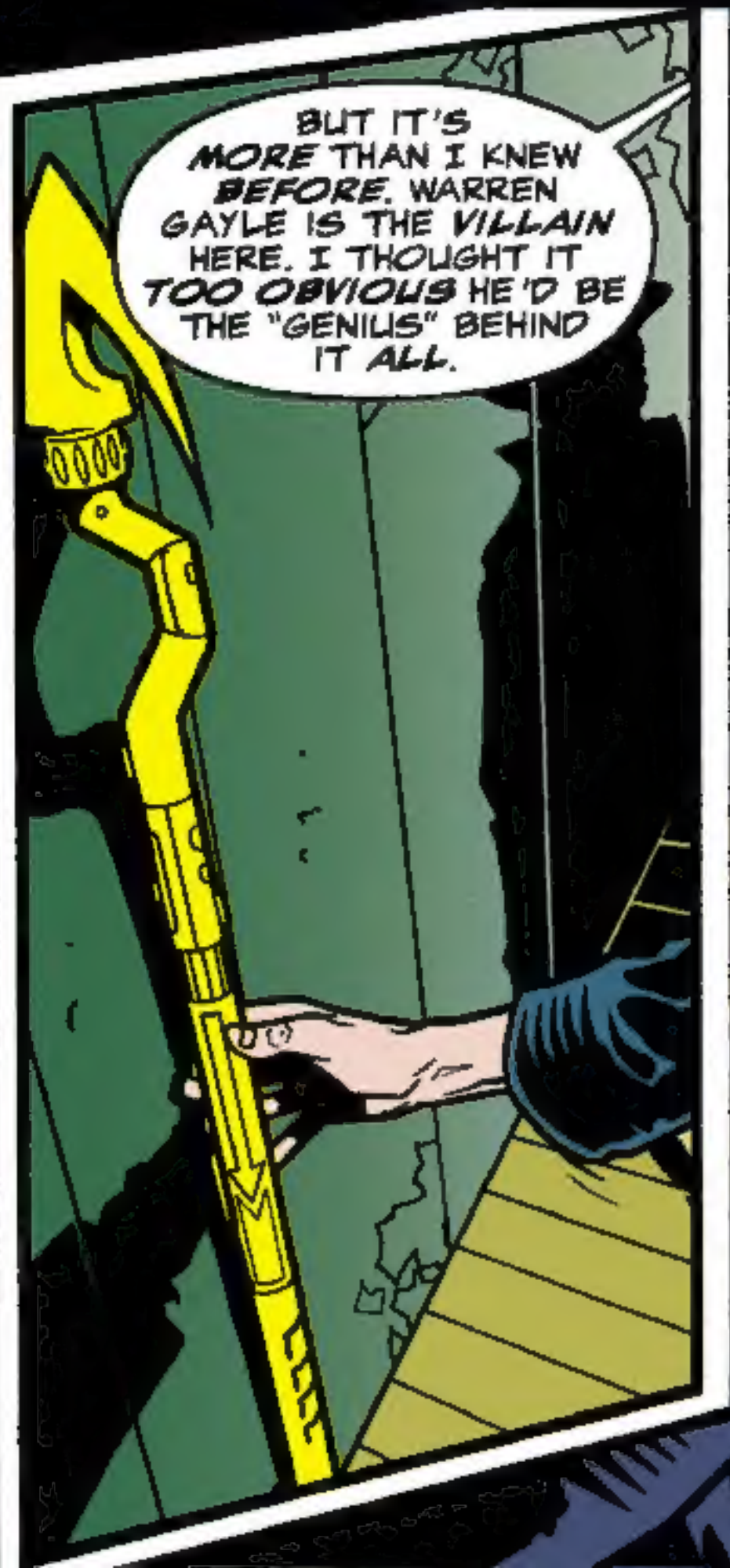
YES, JACK. CLOSE INDEED.

I SAW THE OTHER ARMORED GUARD MOVE. HE'S ALIVE TOO. LET'S GET HIM OUT OF HIS ARMOR.



SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW, WESLEY?

NOT MUCH.



BUT IT'S MORE THAN I KNEW BEFORE. WARREN GAYLE IS THE VILLAIN HERE. I THOUGHT IT TOO OBVIOUS HE'D BE THE "GENIUS" BEHIND IT ALL.



HOWEVER, AN OLD ADVENTURE I SHARED WITH YOUR FATHER... ONE I RECENTLY RECALLED... REMINDED ME NEVER TO BE SURPRISED BY A CRIMINAL'S STUPIDITY.

THEY'RE GOING TO BRING THE AIRSHIP DOWN ON THE ONLOOKERS. THIS IS GAYLE AND HIS PILOT CROFT'S PLAN.

I ASSUME SAYING THAT "WE HAVE TO STOP THEM" IS MY STATING THE OBVIOUS.



THAT'S JUST IT, WESLEY. IT'S NOT GAYLE. I LEARNED THAT MUCH BY OVER-HEARING THEM TALK WHILE THEY HAD ME TIED UP. THE GUY IMPERSONATING GAYLE IS OLDER THAN HE LOOKS. HE'S ABOUT YOUR AGE. HE CLAIMS HE KNEW YOU TOO. NOT AS A FRIEND, THOUGH...AS A FOE.



IT ISN'T REALLY THE PILOT EITHER. THEY'RE BOTH IN DISGUISE, WITH THE YOUNGER OF THE MEN...THE ONE PLAYING THE PILOT, THE OLDER MAN'S PROTEGE OF SOME KIND.

THAT'S EVERYTHING YOU LEARNED?

NO.



ROOM 4-J. SOMETHING'S IN THERE.

YOU DID WELL, SON.

YEAH, REMIND ME NEXT TIME I NEED ANSWERS, TO JUST GO GET CAPTURED. YOU CAN JUST SIT THERE. LIKE YOU'RE HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT OR SOMETHING. YOU HEAR A LOT.

SO.

SO.

ROOM 4-J.



hmm. GUARD.

STAND BACK, WESLEY. I'LL FIGHT HIM.

NO, JACK. WAIT. I HAVE A BETTER IDEA.



OPEN THE DOOR! NO FUNNY MOVES OR YOUR TWO BUDDIES GET IT!

WE AIN'T JOKING! WE'RE DESPERATE MEN!

uh. uh. OKAY. JUST DON'T DO ANYTHING CRAZY.



GREAT IDEA, WES. HOW DID I DO, BY THE WAY?

NOT BAD. PERHAPS A LITTLE TOO 1930's WARNER BROS GANGSTER MOVIE WITH THE DIALOGUE.

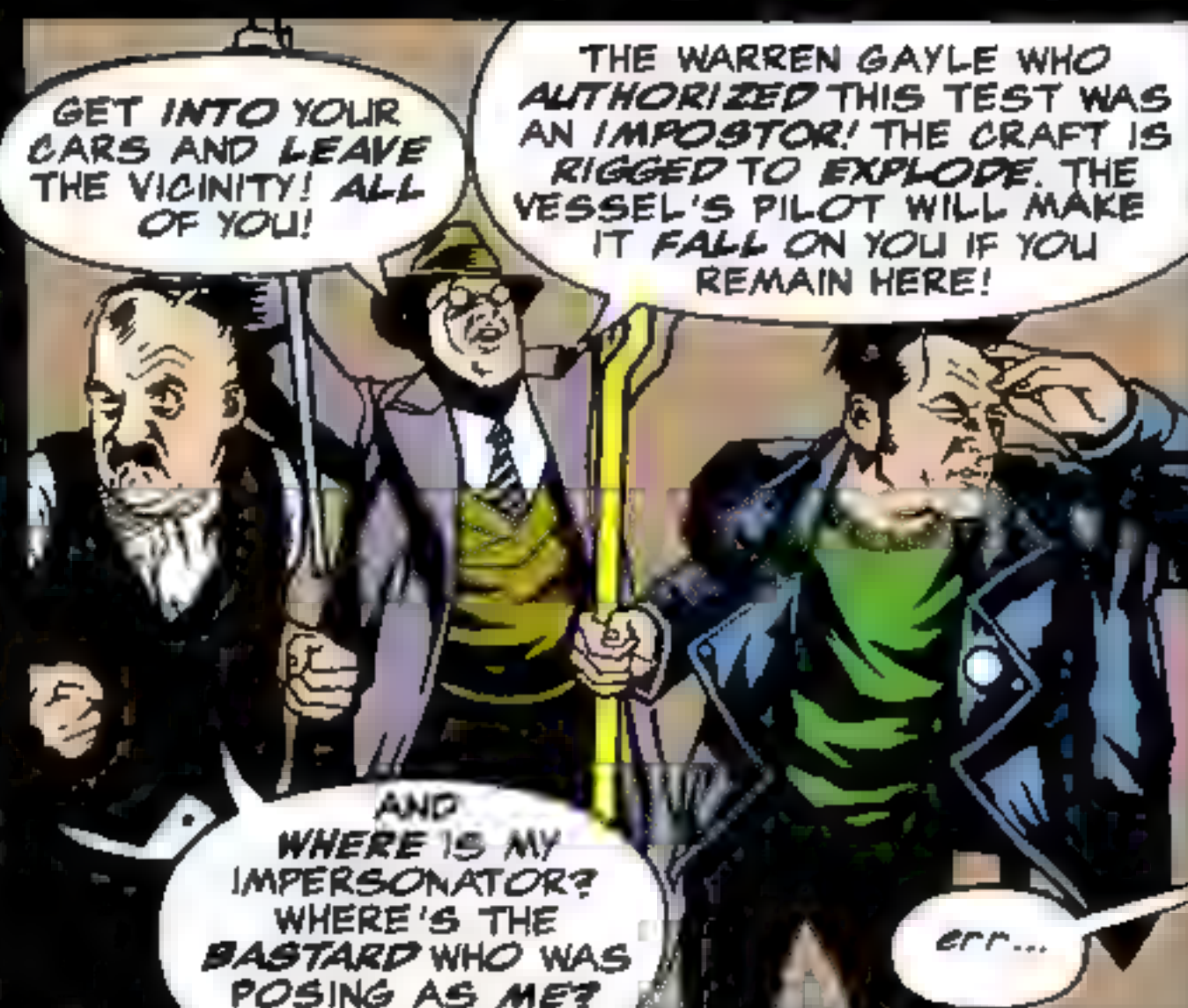
WHAT CAN I TELL YOU? CAGNEY'S BEEN ON MY MIND LATELY.

HERE'S THE ROOM. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN IT. GAYLE JUST TOLD ME TO GUARD IT.

WELL, LET'S SEE, SHALL WE? ALL OF US, TOGETHER.



WARREN GAYLE. THE REAL WARREN GAYLE.



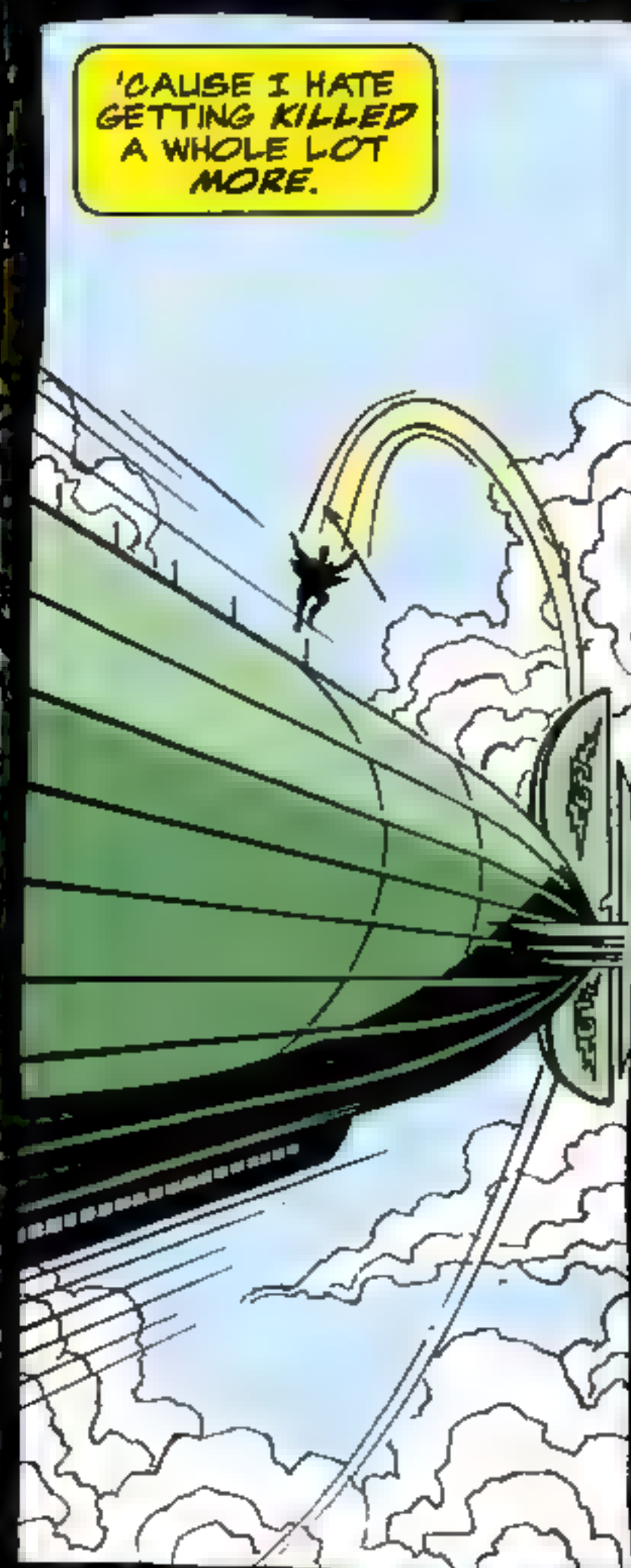
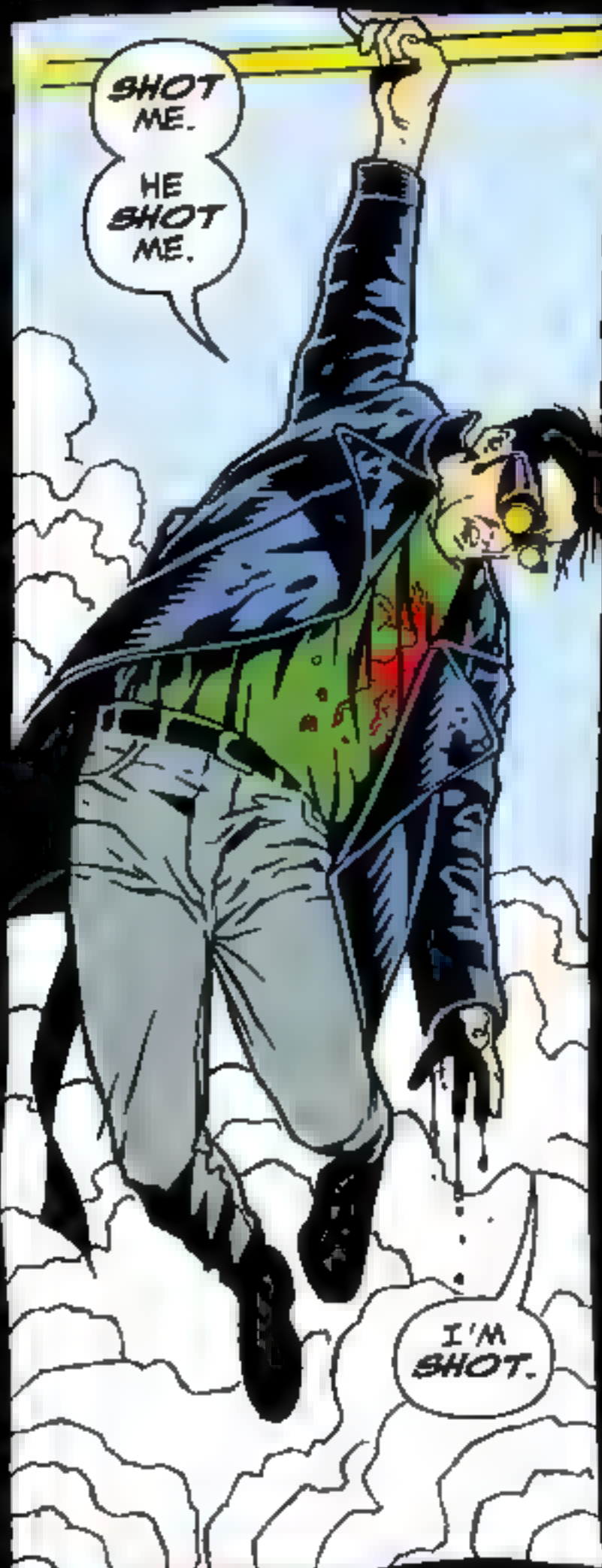


...AND
I'M THE
ONLY GUY
THAT CAN
DO IT.



BAD
IDEA!

ARHHH!



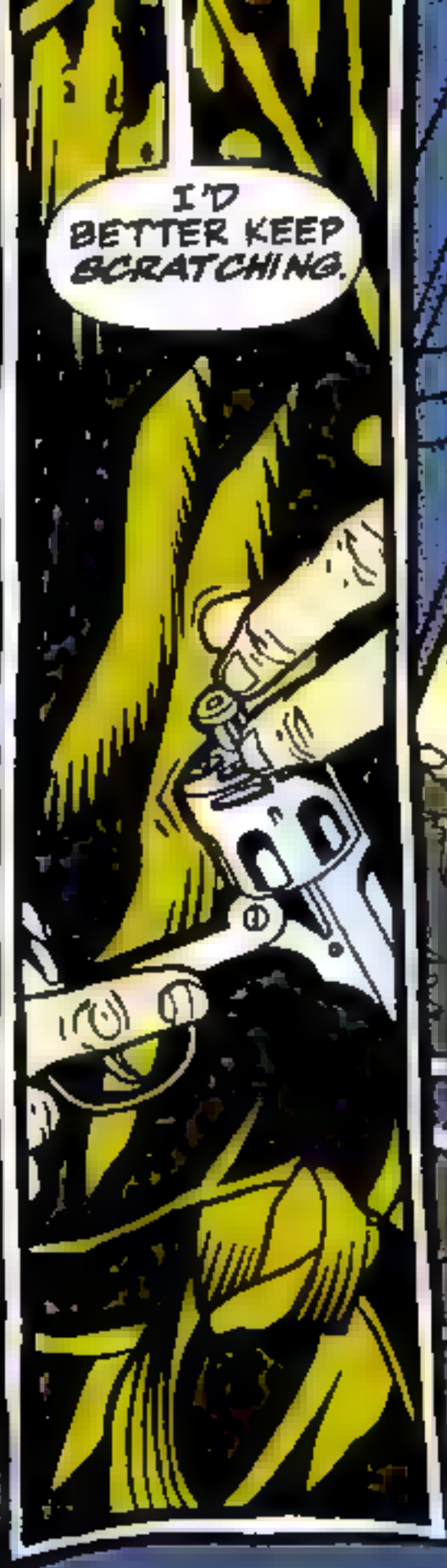


KRAASH!!



YOU
REALLY
ARE AN ITCH
THAT WON'T
STOP!

BACK
ROOM

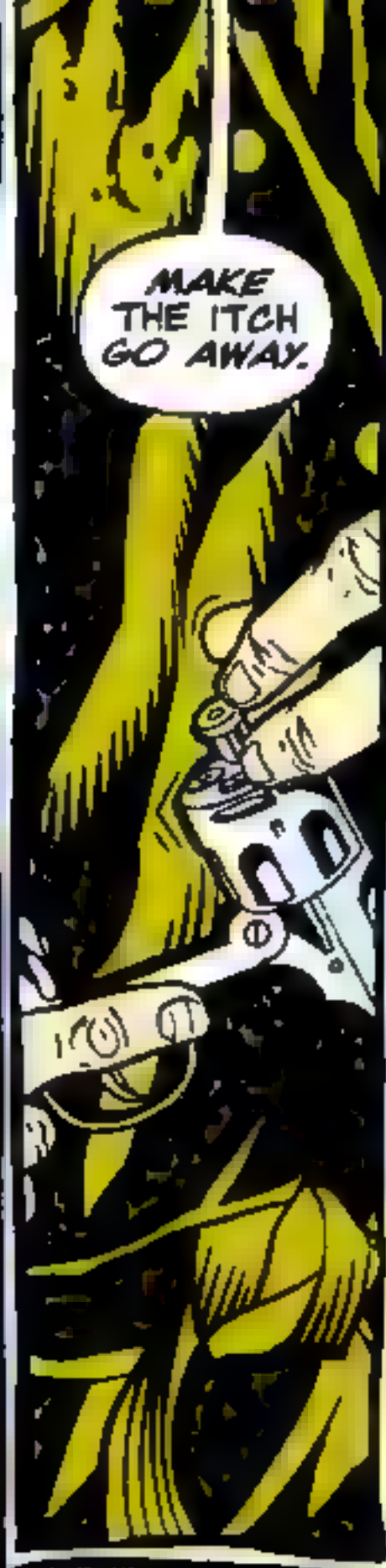


I'D BETTER KEEP SCRATCHING.

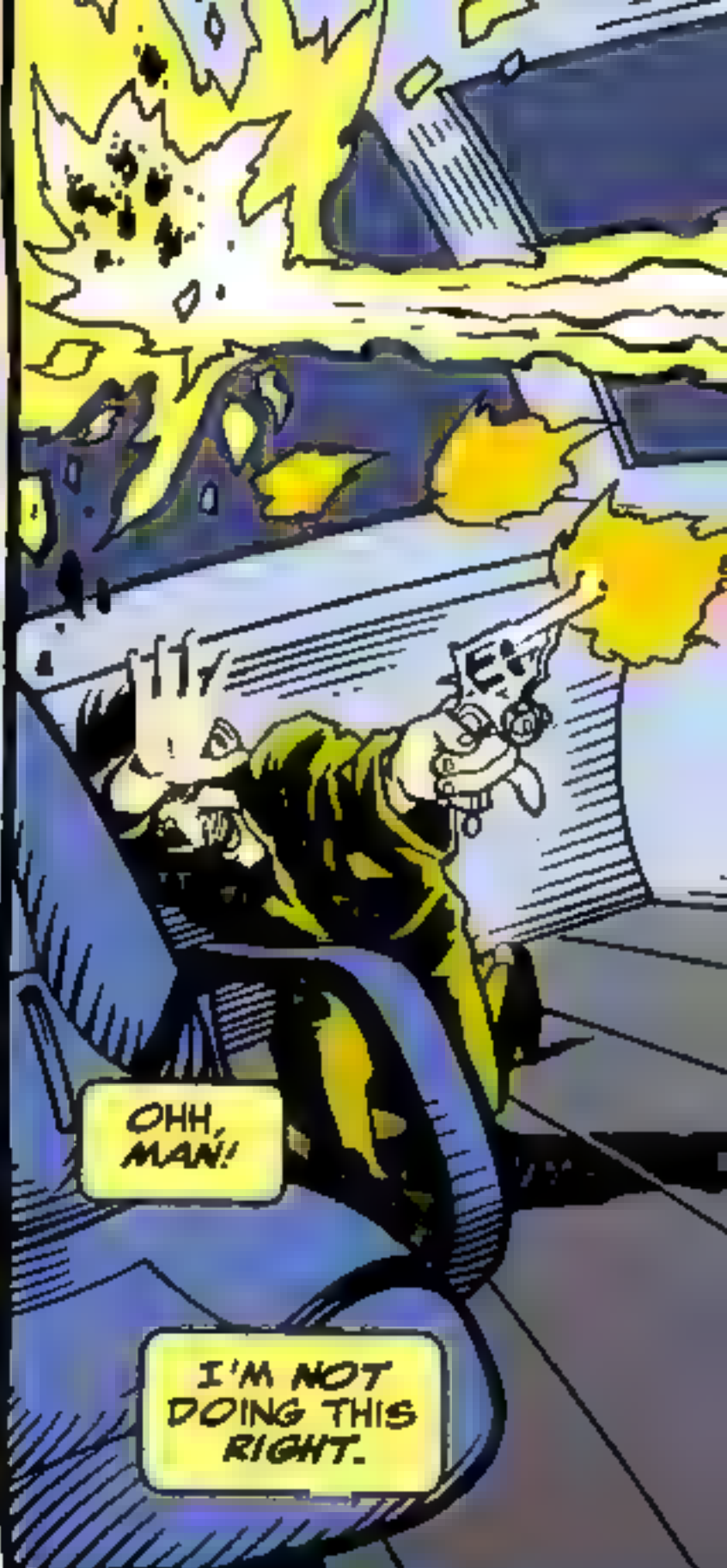


DAMN.

I'M GETTING A MIGRAINE.



MAKE THE ITCH GO AWAY.



OHH, MAN!

I'M NOT DOING THIS RIGHT.

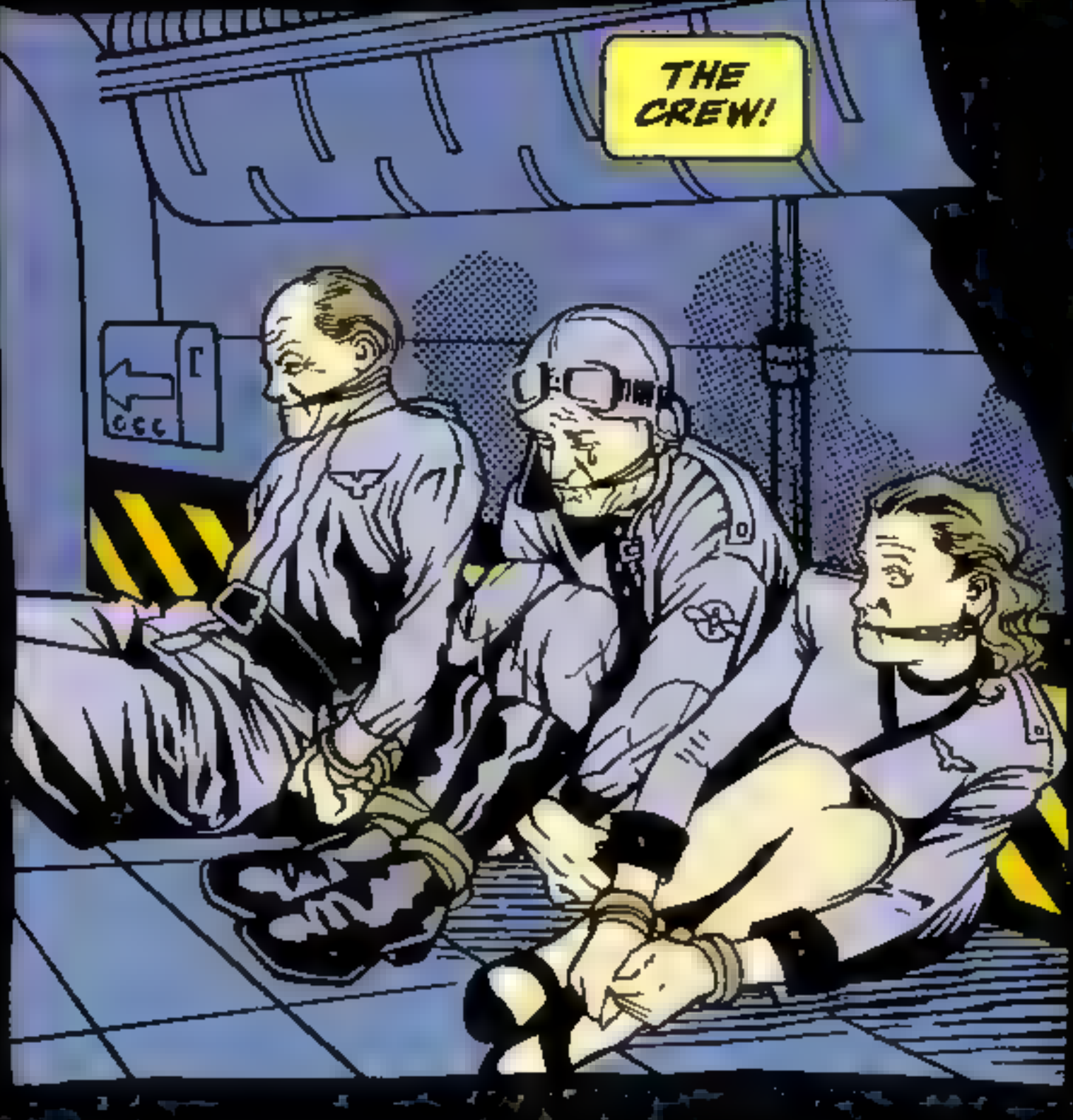


NOT AT ALL.

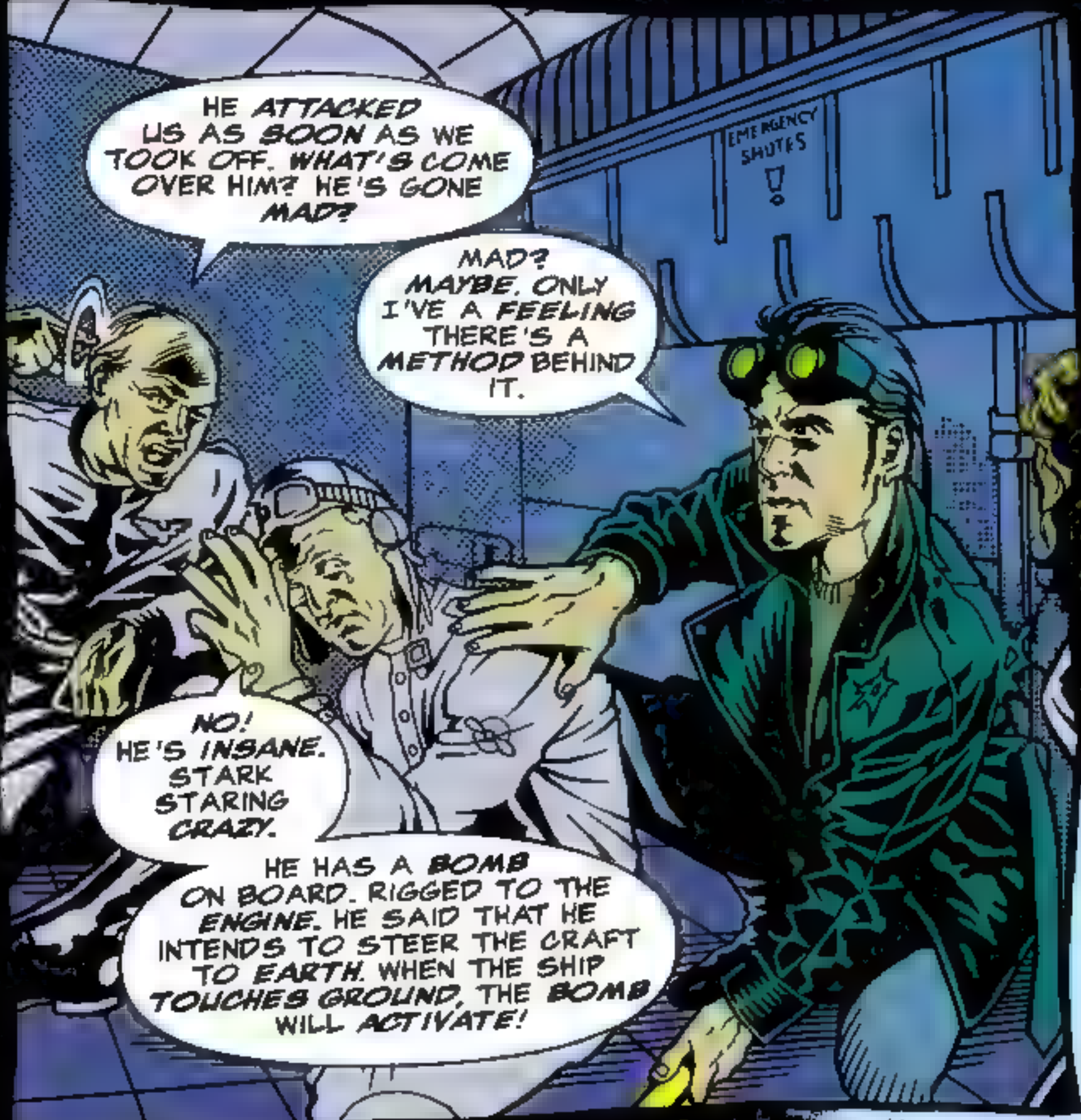
MHHM



UH.



THE CREW!



HE ATTACKED US AS SOON AS WE TOOK OFF. WHAT'S COME OVER HIM? HE'S GONE MAD?

MAD? MAYBE. ONLY I'VE A FEELING THERE'S A METHOD BEHIND IT.

NO! HE'S INSANE. STARK STARING CRAZY.

HE HAS A BOMB ON BOARD. RIGGED TO THE ENGINE. HE SAID THAT HE INTENDS TO STEER THE CRAFT TO EARTH. WHEN THE SHIP TOUCHES GROUND, THE BOMB WILL ACTIVATE!



I'LL KEEP ON KEEPING ON WITH THIS.

BUT I DON'T NEED YOU THREE TO WORRY ABOUT. YOU ALL KNOW HOW TO USE THESE CHUTES?

NO. I DON'T.

WELL, I HOPE YOU'RE A FAST LEARNER.



HAD ENOUGH, HERO?!

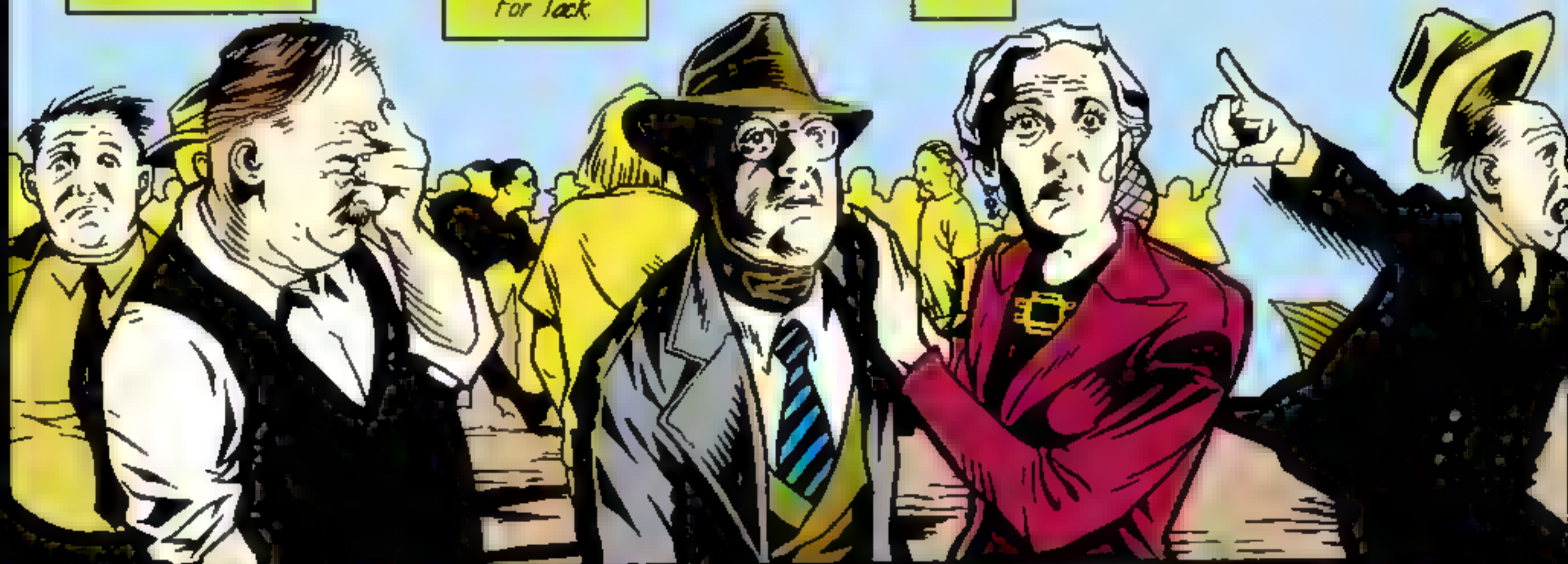
HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH?!



What is it I feel?

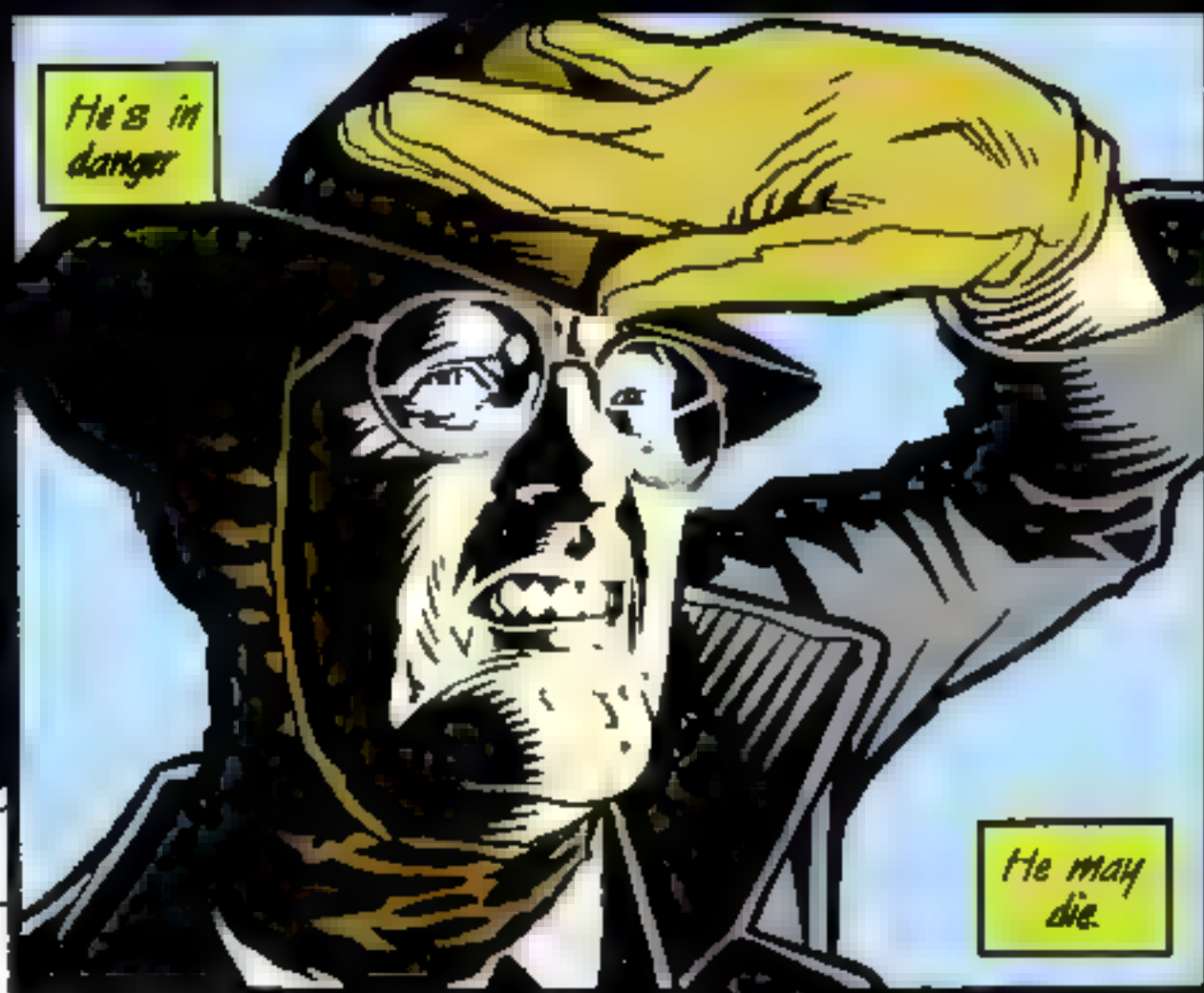
Worry, certainly
For Jack.

But--



He's in
danger

And I envy him
the thrill of it



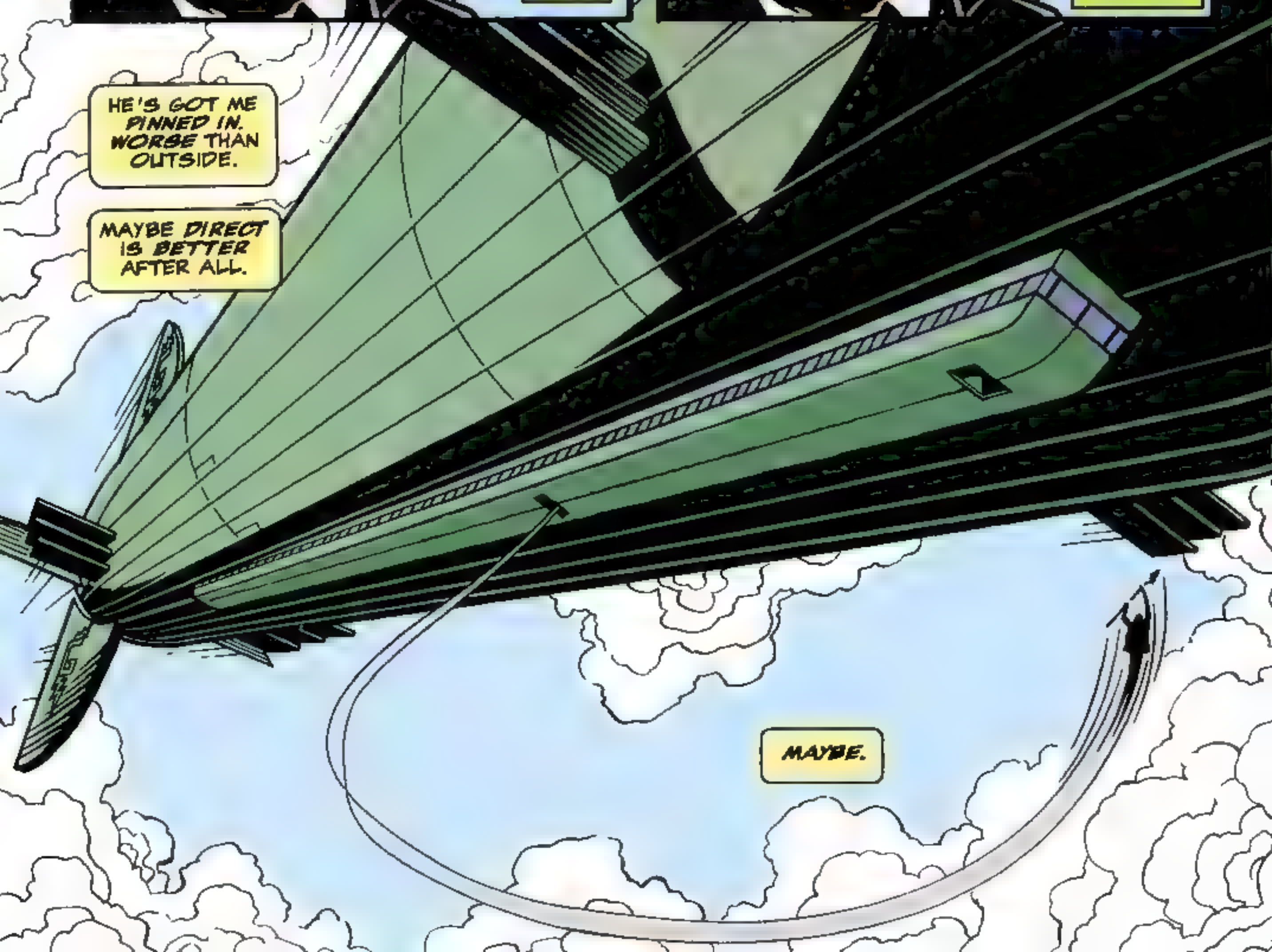
He may
die.



Until this
moment, I
didn't realize
how much I
missed it

HE'S GOT ME
PINNED IN.
WORSE THAN
OUTSIDE.

MAYBE DIRECT
IS BETTER
AFTER ALL.



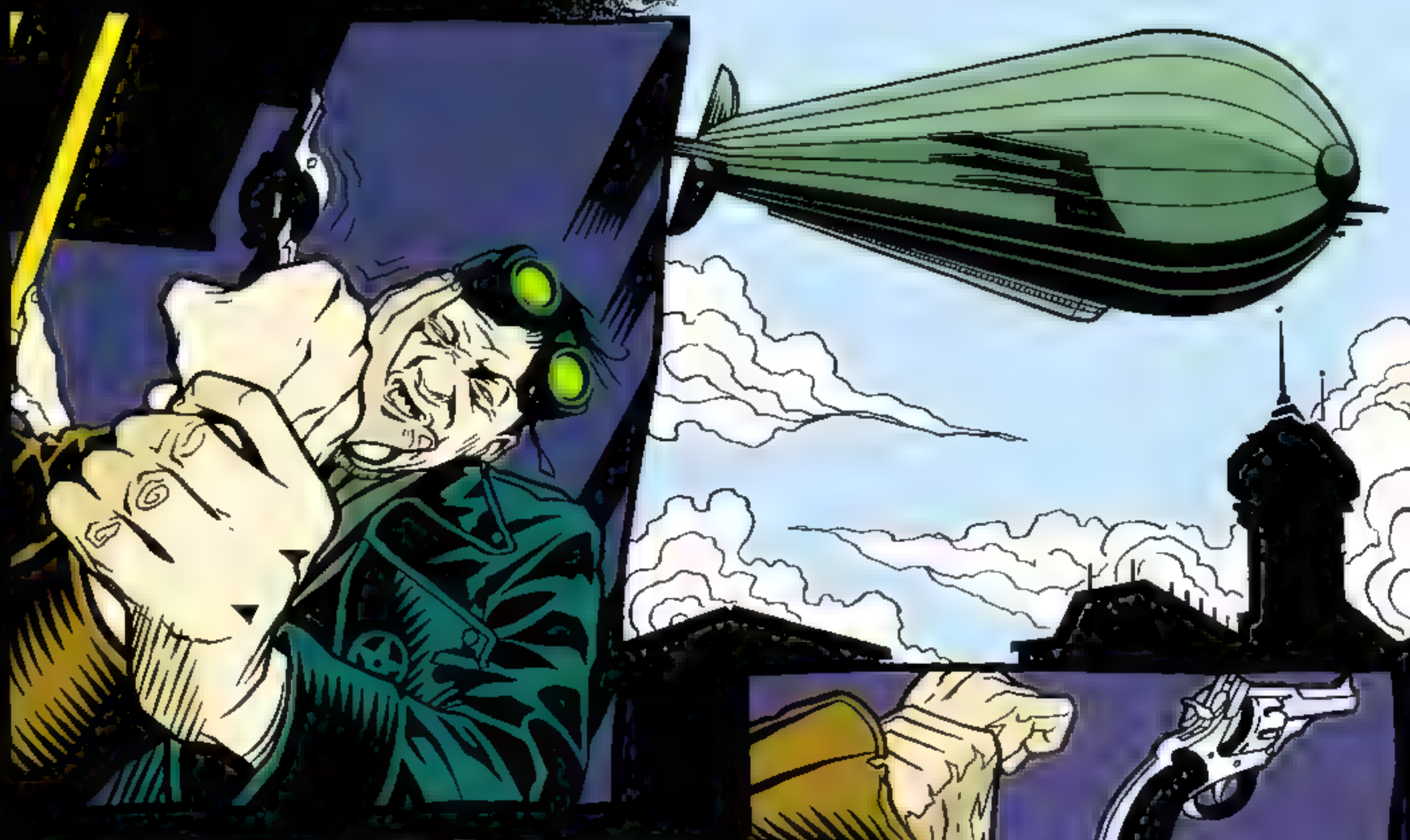
MAYBE.

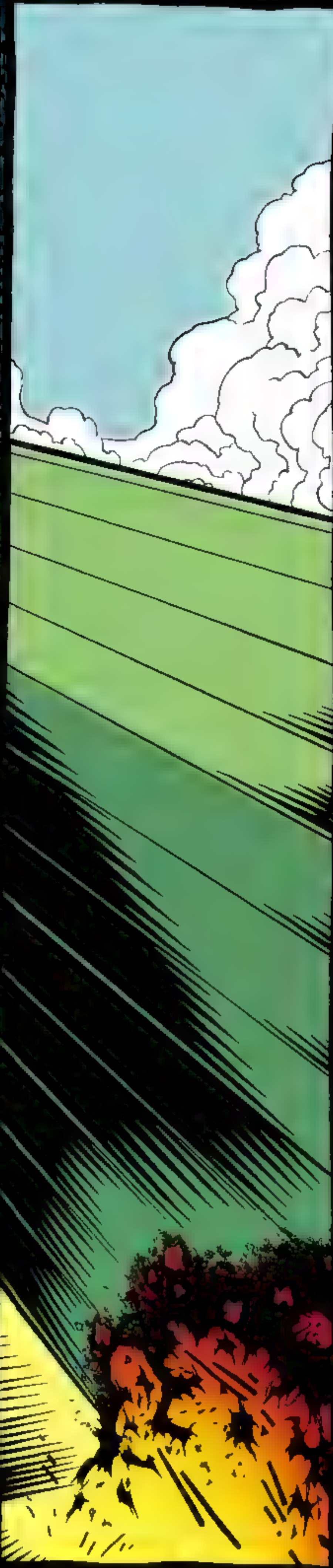
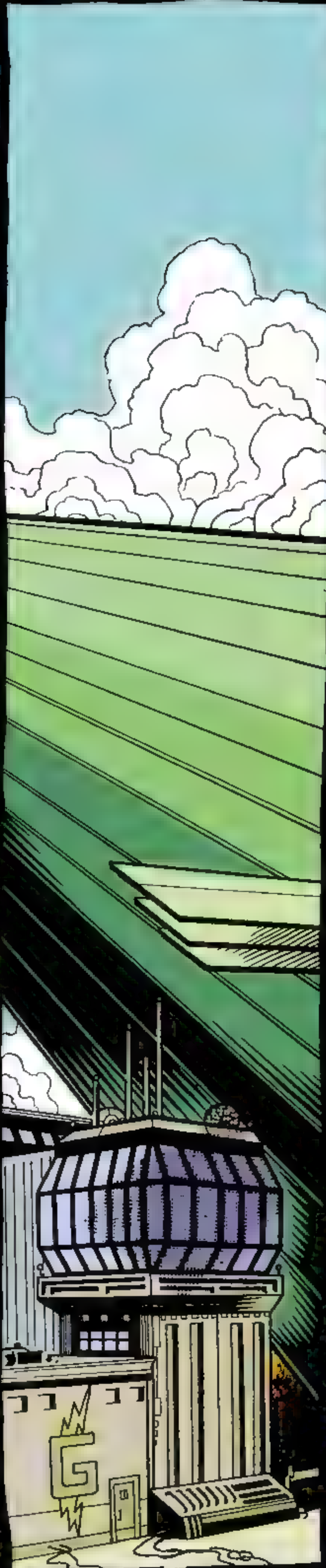
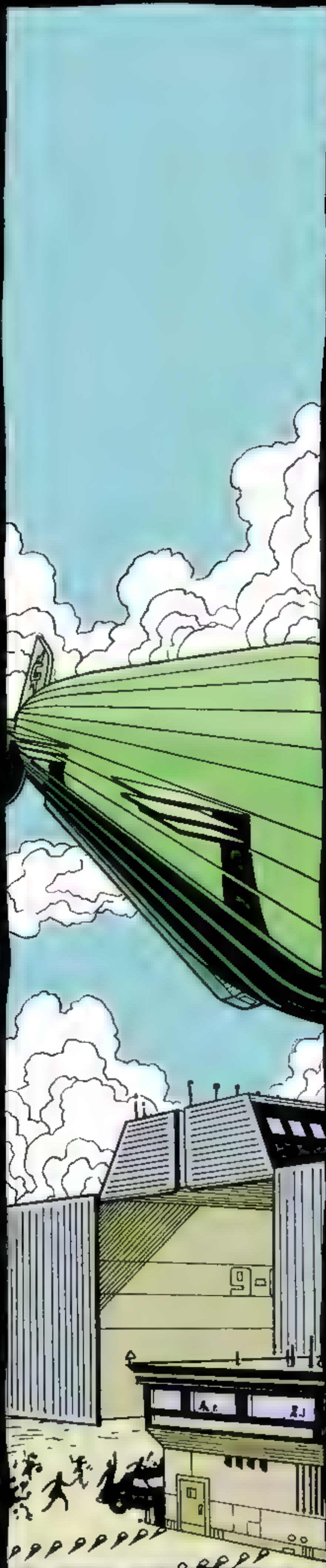


HOW'S
THE ITCH
NOW?

HUH?









SO HE HIT ME. I FELL BACK. I THINK HE LUNGED FOR HIS GUN, BUT THAT WAS WHEN THE AIRSHIP TOOK A STEEP DIP. HE WENT FLYING. I WENT FLYING. EVERYTHING IN THE PLACE WENT FLYING.

I KNEW I'D BETTER GET OUT OF THERE.

I DIVED FOR A WINDOW. GOT OUT JUST AHEAD OF THE BLAST.

BUT THE GUY PLAYING CROFT. HE DIDN'T HAVE A COSMIC ROD TO GET HIM TO SAFETY. HE DIED IN THE EXPLOSION. HAD TO.

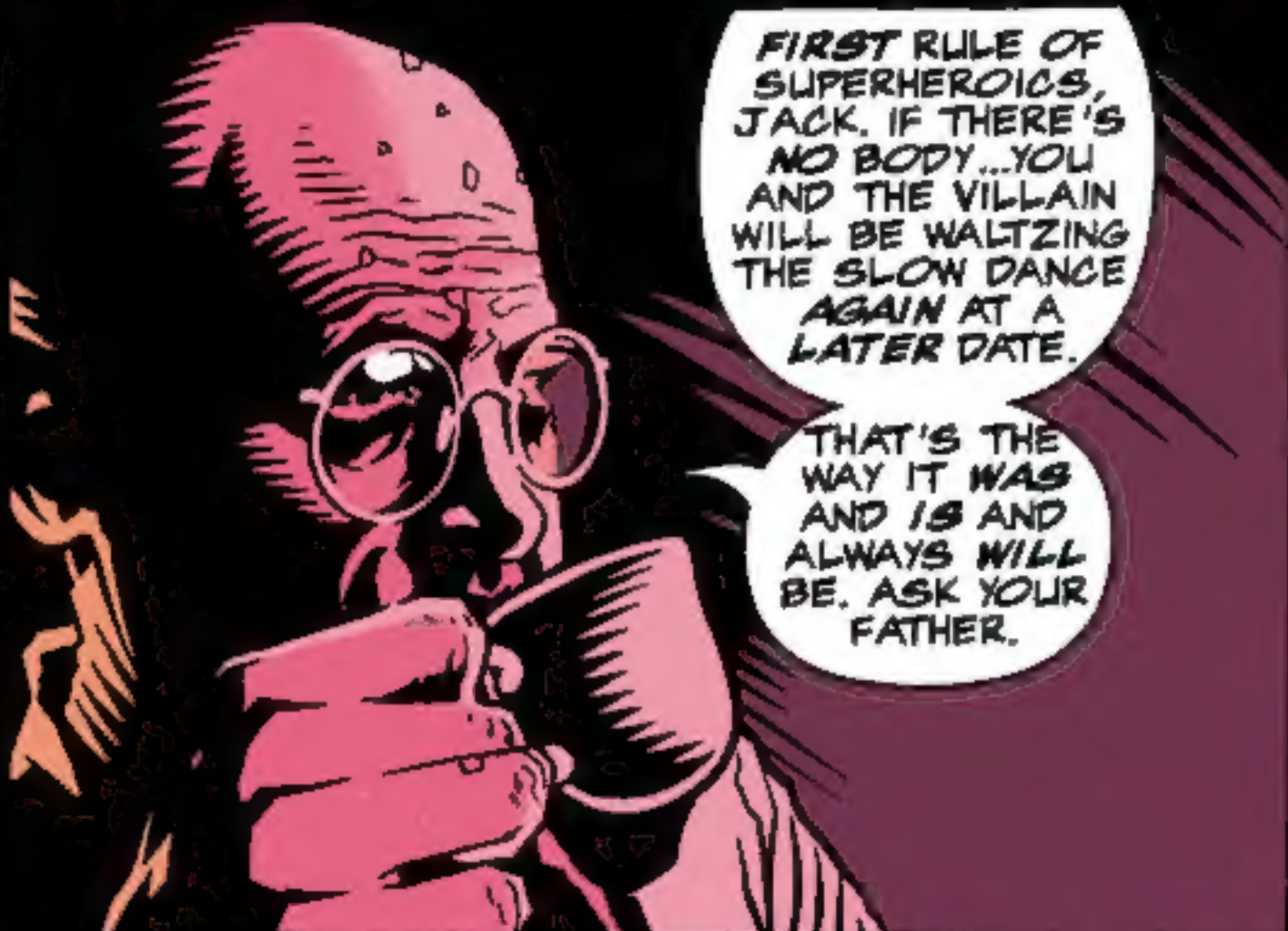


DID YOU SEE HIM DIE?

ERR, NO.

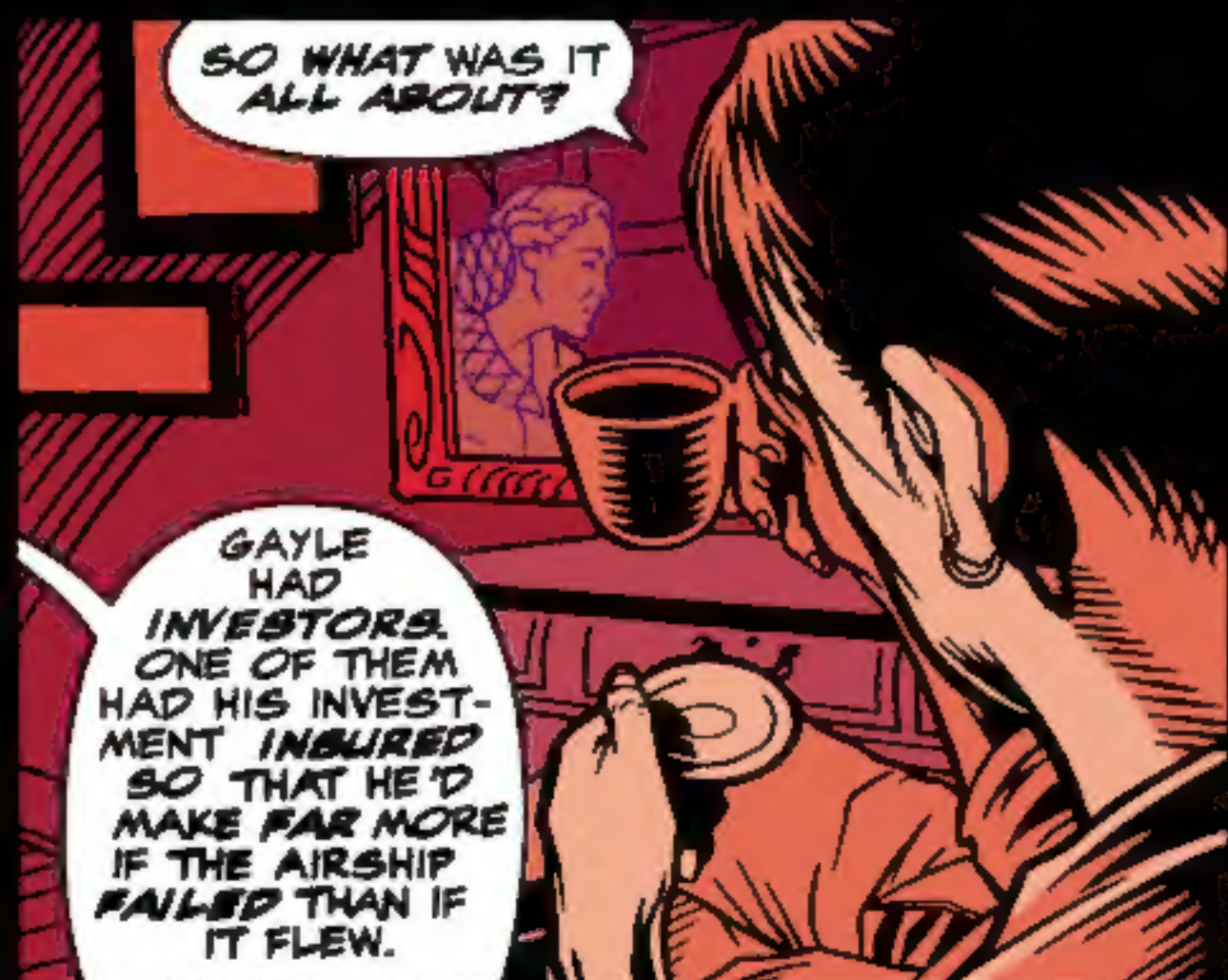
DID THEY FIND THE BODY?

NO.



FIRST RULE OF SUPERHEROICS, JACK. IF THERE'S NO BODY...YOU AND THE VILLAIN WILL BE WALTZING THE SLOW DANCE AGAIN AT A LATER DATE.

THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS AND IS AND ALWAYS WILL BE. ASK YOUR FATHER.



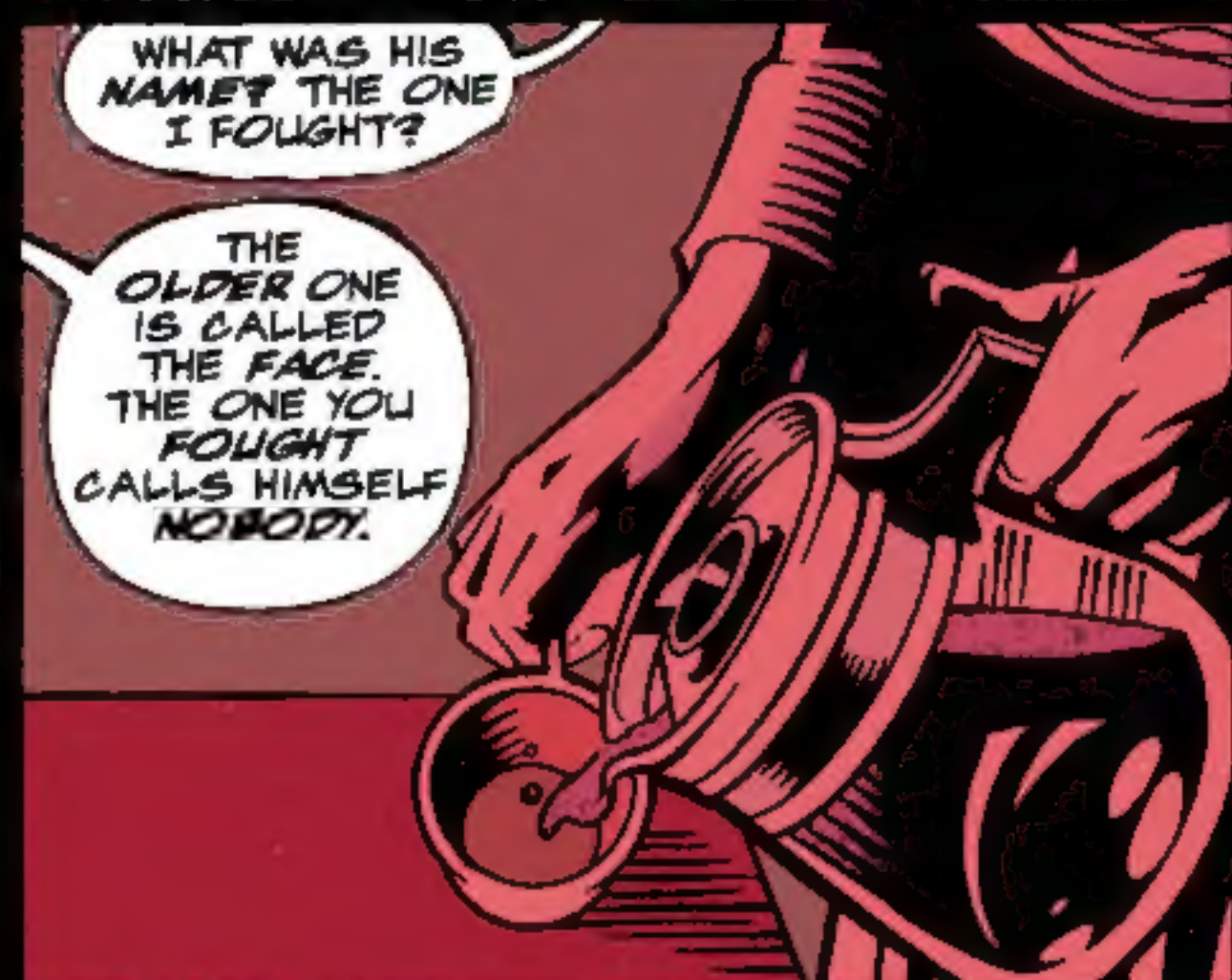
SO WHAT WAS IT ALL ABOUT?

GAYLE HAD INVESTORS. ONE OF THEM HAD HIS INVESTMENT INSURED SO THAT HE'D MAKE FAR MORE IF THE AIRSHIP FAILED THAN IF IT FLEW.



THAT INVESTOR HIRED THE TWO KILLERS.

YES, THE ONE AS OLD AS ME, I'VE ENCOUNTERED BEFORE. THE OTHER, THE ONE WHO PLAYED CROFT, IS YOUNGER.



WHAT WAS HIS NAME? THE ONE I FOUGHT?

THE OLDER ONE IS CALLED THE FACE. THE ONE YOU FOUGHT CALLS HIMSELF NOBODY.



THE INVESTOR COULD ONLY COLLECT ON HIS INSURANCE IF THE TEST WAS SEEN TO FAIL. HENCE HIS HIRING TWO MASTERS OF DISGUISE WHO BECAME GAYLE AND CROFT AND SO WERE ABLE TO CONTROL THE TEST'S FAILURE.

THE REAL CROFT HAD GAMBLING DEBTS. HE OFFERED TO SELL THE TECHNICAL INFORMATION NECESSARY TO CAUSE THE CRASH AND THE BOMB ON BOARD THE CRAFT LOOK LIKE PART OF A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT.

AND?

CROFT'S BODY WAS FOUND THIS MORNING. DEAD BY DOG ATTACK.

BUT GAYLE'S RUINED. I FEEL LIKE I'VE FAILED.

WARREN GAYLE IS A WEALTHY MAN. HE LOST A FORTUNE, TRUE. BUT HE HAS FIVE OR SIX MORE TO KEEP HIM HAPPY.

AND HOW DID WE FAIL, WHEN JOHN BLAINE'S WIFE, HELEN, HAS BEEN CLEARED OF MURDER? WE DIDN'T CATCH THE VILLAINS OR PREVENT THE CRIME, BUT SOMETIMES EXPOSING THE CRIME FOR WHAT IT IS, AND CLEARING THE INNOCENT OF ACCUSATION IS AS GOOD AS IT GETS.

ANYWAY...

...IN ALL THE EXCITEMENT, YOU NEVER WENT ANY FURTHER WITH YOUR EXPLANATION WHY YOU CHOSE TO VISIT ME. YOU WERE TELLING ME IT INVOLVED AN OLD CASE OF MINE...WHEN I ENCOUNTERED THE MIST IN AN EARLIER INCARNATION.

UMMM...JOHN SMYTHE I BELIEVE HE CALLED HIMSELF AT THE TIME, THOUGH I SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND THAT TO BE AN ALIAS.

WHY WAS THAT OF INTEREST TO YOU?

IN THE COURSE OF YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH THE MIST BACK THEN, DID YOU COME ACROSS A POSSESSION OF HIS? IT'S A SHOT IN THE DARK, BUT I'M HOPING YOU STILL HAVE IT.

AND WHAT MIGHT THAT BE, JACK?

A MEDAL FOR BRAVERY THAT HE WON FIGHTING IN WORLD WAR ONE.

THE MIST'S VICTORIAN CROSS.

The End



DREAM DIARY

Deadman Wade

"THIS IS WHAT
AWESOME
LOOKS LIKE".

DCP